DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 304 SP 032 641

AUTHOR Ratajczak, Luella; Hauser, Jerald
TITLE Energizing Cooperating Teachers: An Experimental Seminars Model.
PUB DATE 6 Aug 90
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Association of Teacher Educators Summer Workshop (Baltimore, MD, August 6, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperating Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Field Experience Programs; Helping Relationship; Higher Education; *Improvement Programs; *Inservice Teacher Education; Seminars; *Student Teachers; *Student Teacher Supervisors
IDENTIFIERS Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

A pilot program, the Professional Growth Experience (PGE), was designed and implemented by teacher educators from three Wisconsin teacher education programs to improve the guidance skills of cooperating teachers during their actual supervision of student teachers. Each PGE seminar enrolls no more than 10 currently engaged cooperating teachers and meets a minimum of 10 hours a semester, with 12 hours considered a preferred option. Each participant selects a project to be completed during the course of the program. In the seminars already completed, the general project most frequently selected by the cooperating teachers was an individualized handbook for incoming student teachers outlining in detail what the cooperating teacher considered the most important and helpful information for the student teacher. Descriptions are given of the focus of each of the six 2-hour seminars and of typical projects selected by the teachers. The benefits of the PGE program for cooperating teachers are discussed, and a brief assessment of the program is included. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED324304

ENERGIZING COOPERATING TEACHERS: AN EXPERIMENTAL SEMINARS MODEL

Paper presented at ATE Summer
Workshop - 1990
Towson State University
Baltimore, Maryland

Luellá Ratajczak
U. Wis.-Oshkosh
Oshkosh, WI 54901

Jerald Hauser
St. Norbert College
De Pere, WI 54115

SP032641

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. A. Hauser
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ENERGIZING COOPERATING TEACHERS: AN EXPERIMENTAL SEMINARS MODEL

INTRODUCTION:

The power of cooperating teachers to transform inexperienced student teachers into worthy beginning professionals is tremendous. This conviction was shared by a group of Wisconsin teacher educators who met for several extended time periods in 1988 and 1989 to discuss and eventually devise a cooperating teacher guidance and motivation pilot program called the Profesional Growth Experience(PGE) model.

The PGE model directly represents the desire of its creators to improve the guidance skills of cooperating teachers during their actual supervision of student teachers. The more traditional avenue toward assisting cooperating teachers is to periodically offer college credit courses intended to prepare and perhaps enthuse them for student teacher guidance. Such courses are usually open to all who wish to enroll, including teachers(often many of them) who are not assisting student teachers while they are in the course. Such courses may also be very large and taught by individuals who may or may not be active field supervisors

A primary conviction of the PGE model designers is belief that interest and discourse about high quality student teacher guidance is most consequential while a student teacher is assigned to the cooperating teacher. Designers were also bonded by strong belief in the advantage of a seminars approach to cooperating teacher assistance and motivation. The PGE seminars enroll no more than ten currently engaged cooperating teachers at a time. Such an enrollment ceiling is viewed necessary for optimal discourse and individual reflection potentials.

PGE MODEL DESIGNERS:

Informal discussion of the PGE cooperating teacher guidance model originally occurred between a very experienced college student teacher supervisor and a Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction bureau chief. 1 Two other teacher educators with extended experience in student teacher supervision and field experience placement were contacted and a group meeting was arranged in Madison, Wisconsin to discuss virtues of what would become the Professional Growth

Experience and Pilot Program model. 2 Mutual interest in the alternative was percieved and plans to move forward were begun.

Real planning for the pilot program began in the summer of 1988 when teacher educators from three Wisconsin campuses met with two DPI educators. 3 The three participant institutions were University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin.

Enthusiasm for and committment to the PGE model and pilot program potentials grew with additional meetings in the Fall, Winter, and Spring of 1988-89. At these day-long meetings, guidelines and details related to program forms, seminar structures and content, campus program approvals, cooperating teacher recruits, and a program assessment design were considered and gradually agreed upon by the PGE designers. In the summer of 1989, each campus director planned the final seminar and participant details. The tricampus PGE pilot program seminars were begun on the three campuses in the Fall college semester of 1989.

SHARED CONVICTIONS:

As the pilot programs began, a set of mutually shared beliefs had developed. A few of the more important ones were:

1) belief that good student teacher guidance is practiced by cooperating teachers who conscientiously devote themselves to careful thinking about it.

2) belief that cooperating teacher reflection about good student teacher guidance may be most consequential and focused while student teachers are actually assigned to that teacher's classroom.

3) belief in the need for college teacher education personnel and cooperating teachers to feel bonded by a sense of partnership and mutual endeavor.

4) belief that alternatives to traditional college credit courses in student teacher supervision are worth experimentation.

5) belief in the value of small group seminars as sources of dynamic cooperating teacher motivation and committment to student teacher direction.

6) belief in the virtues of extended reflection for helping cooperating teachers to improve as student teacher mentors.

7) belief that student teachers will become additionally inspired by knowing that their cooperating teachers are concurrently engaged in a related reflection and discourse enterprise.

8) belief that positive seminar outcomes can and should transcend traditional course completion(for credit) and honorarium incentives.

9) belief that a seminar model where college supervisor and cooperating teachers engage in discourse will be excellent for all participants.

10) belief in the probability that various unanticipated positive outcomes would result from the PGE pilot program experiments, including the possibility that the model would be approved by DPI officials and become available options to other Wisconsin programs of teacher education.

SEMINAR STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

While planning for seminar structure and content, it was agreed that common seminar standards were necessary including:

1) the number of on-campus seminar meeting hours per semester. A minimum requirement of ten seminar hours became a standard. Twelve (or more) were viewed as a probable higher standard.

2) at least one planning and discussion session with each participating cooperating teacher at the school site would be conducted by the PGE coordinator.

3) submission of specific forms by each PGE coordinator for DPI approval. These included seminar participant rosters, preliminary project plans written by each participant, and final project descriptions and assessments also submitted by each cooperating teacher participant.

4) final approval of each seminar project by the DPI participant in this pilot program.4 All of the submitted forms were carefully reviewed and either approved or returned with written improvement recommendations.

5) responsibility for actual reading of submitted project portfolios as belonging to the PGE seminar coordinator. The portfolios submitted at the end of the seminar sessions were never sent to the DPI evaluator. This means that the the seminar coordinator was essentially responsible for quality control of the final submitted project portfolios.

There was never a desire among the pilot program designers to rigorously stream the seminars into highly similar or codified procedures. But the planners also agreed that there were risks associated with the possibility of groups wandering into generic discussion areas having little or nothing to do with cooperating and

student teacher activities and issues. The resolution to stay focused was unanimous among the planners. The relevance of seminar research and projects to cooperating and student teachers was also a concern that planners agreed should be well guided.

Each PGE seminar coordinator determined convenient meeting times and places. The St. Norbert College time and content design can be summarized, though it may or may not be typical. In this seminar design(conducted in both Fall and Spring semesters, 1989-90) there were six calendar meetings spread over each sixteen week student teaching semester. Each meeting was about two hours in length for a total of twelve seminar hours. The meeting area was a medium sized conference room with a large octagonal table and chair arrangement to facilitate round table discussions.

The first meeting focused on introductions, distributions of college and DPI forms, attendance and project expectations, and general dialogue meant to clarify seminar purposes and send participants away feeling optomistic and motivated.

The second meeting, two or three weeks later, focused on project plans by each cooperating teacher and collection of preliminary DPI forms(with project goals and summaries) if they were completed. Each seminar participant spoke for several minutes about their project intentions, after which the rest of the group contributed feedback. Commentaries about progress of various student teachers were also exchanged. In fact dialogue pertaining to various student teachers was present at all of the seminars and greatly enhanced the seminar content.

The third meeting included collection of DPI project forms, if they had not already been submitted. Additional dialogue among the seminar participants about progress of their project work occurred. In a few cases, problems had occurred and were shared with the others. Also success and problems with certain student teachers had begun to occur and these also became seminar content.

The fourth meeting focused on convictions about student teacher guidance that seminar participants had been asked to reflect on at the previous meeting. Two article readings were provided to assist personal reflection and seminar discourse. By this time all of the cooperating teachers had come to know details about the various student teachers. This last outcome became an important and intriguing feature of our remaining seminar sessions.

The fifth meeting continued focus on student teacher growth and related cooperating teacher questions and convictions. The status of the project portfolios and DPI final evaluation forms, completed or near completion, were assessed by the seminar coordinator. Official college reports and written evaluations by cooperating teachers were also discussed during the seminar.

The sixth (and final) meeting required the submission of the DPI final evaluation forms and the actual project portfolios to the seminar leader. As with the preliminary forms, the seminar leader submitted the final forms to the DPI official for approval. Strong and tentative resolutions about effective student teacher supervision were also shared by each seminar participant.

The above content and sequence model represents one pilot program format used over two semesters. This format will be maintained over a second year because it functioned very well for the participants. Others interested in the Wisconsin PGE pilot program model may develope other content and sequence designs.

SEMINAR PROJECTS:

Three standards, related to seminar project quality, were mutually established by PGE pilot program planners. They were:

1) Projects should have a goal structure and content focus intended to improve cooperating teacher knowledge about excellent student teacher supervision.

2) The project choices should be the creative and personal decisions of the cooperating teachers.

3) Responsibility for project guidance and quality should be mutually shared by cooperating teacher, seminar coordinator, and DPI evaluator. Project portfolios should be submitted to the seminar coordinator, along with completed official forms. Seminar coordinators can exercise the option of forwarding the preliminary and final forms to the DPI evaluator or returning the forms to the participating cooperaing teacher for modifications. The DPI evaluator can accept forms as submitted, approving the project phases, or return the forms with written suggestions for needed alterations applied to projects.

Examples of plans and projects submitted to coordinators during the pilot program year are various and often both creative and pragmatic. A few brief descriptions may advance insights into PGE seminar project potentials.

The general project most frequently selected was an individualized handbook for incoming student teachers. Handbook designs and productions by seminar participants featured specific school descriptions, school history, pupil and neighborhood profiles, lesson and unit plan formats, school day/calendar details, biography sheets for student teachers(to complete and give back to the cooperating teacher), an already completed cooperating teacher biography and resume, available equipment, materials, and other resources

bibliographies, and descriptions of school or school system teacher evaluation procedures.

One seminar participant(Fall, 1989) titled her student teacher handbook, "Survival knowledge for Kindergarten Student Teachers." Another interesting handbook focused on recommendations intended to advance student teacher knowledge about creative teaching possibilities within the "somewhat restricted boundaries" of the student teaching enterprise.

Many seminar participants selected projects other than handbook designs. They included:

1) a research paper on cooperating teacher competencies affecting pupil success and the relationship of those competencies to the success of student teachers. The main hypothesis of the paper was that good teachers of students should usually be good teachers of student teachers.

2) a research paper that distinguished between conditions of self-esteem in contrast to conditions of self-confidence. The main hypothesis and persuasive deductions were that cooperating teachers are in more direct control of student teacher self-confidence than student teacher self-esteem.

3) description of an experimental partnership of cooperating and student teacher with the goal being to start implementing cooperative learning activities within a fifth grade classroom. The premise of the experiment was that a student teacher can be a very helpful addition to the cooperating teacher's classroom, even when new and "somewhat risky" endeavors are attempted.

4) a pupil learning style diagnostic procedure modified by the cooperating teacher from an academic journal article for subsequent use by student teachers.

5) the creation of a detailed inventory titled, "Student Teacher Evaluation of Cooperating Teacher." The purpose of this questionaire was the creation of an assessment form for student teacher feedback to the cooperating teacher after the student teaching assignment. This inventory, judged by the seminar coordinator as better than any in his files, has been incorporated into an updated college program STUDENT AND COOPERATING TEACHER HANDBOOK.

The last example, and several other projects not described, are impressive indication of the benefit that the PGE seminars model can have for college teacher education programs, starting with the seminar coordinators.

BENEFITS FOR COOPERATING TEACHERS

Unique individual and group benefits occurred for pilot program participants. Spoken convictions by cooperating teachers unanimously praised various PGE outcomes during a program assessment session at Madison, Wisconsin in December, 1989. At this day-long meeting of pilot program designers, coordinators, cooperating teacher participants, and DPI observers, various complimentary testimonials by cooperating teachers cited several positive outcomes. These included descriptions of student teacher guidance opportunities that were enhanced by the seminar discourse where visions and problems about student teacher supervision were discussed in atmospheres of mutual interest and respect.

Benefits of a more official nature that were originally planned into the pilot program should also be described. For full attendance and participation in the seminars and successful completion of the projects(including DPI initial and final project reports), the PGE participants gained:

1) 90 clock hours of college course equivalency toward periodic State of Wisconsin relicensing requirements. These "clock hour" gains fulfill half of the DPI requirement stipulating that six college credits or 180 approved clock hour equivalency experiences must be completed every five years for teacher certification renewal. This means that PGE cooperating teacher participants can gain half of the needed professional work to qualify for certification renewal. The other half must be obtained from other college course or DPI approved clock hour experiences. Also important is that PGE seminars can be taken for clock hours only once in each five year license cycle. A cooperating teacher cannot gain complete(180 clock hours) college course equivalency by enrolling in two PGE seminar sessions.

2) DPI approval to participate as officially designated cooperating teachers in campus programs of teacher education anywhere in Wisconsin. Such an advantage increases and improves the pool of available and committed cooperating teachers across the state. Large urban and small rural areas may be better served by the PGE program.

3) unique rewards created by individual college teacher education programs could be and were enacted. At St. Norbert College, the PGE coordinator was able to obtain full lifetime campus library privileges for successful seminar participants. At St. Norbert, the lifetime library privilege is unique to PGE graduates. The usual benefit to cooperating teachers is full use of the library during the year they have taken on student teacher assignments.

4) mutual professional growth opportunities involving DPI personnel, college program faculty, and cooperating teachers. In one situation, DPI officials, college PGE coordinators, and cooperating teachers were able to create a national conference paper proposal which was accepted and presented by representatives of each group.

The potential for very enthusiastic and capable cooperating teachers to motivate and instruct college seminar coordinators during the dialogic process is also a noteworthy benefit.

PILOT PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND FINAL NOTES

In December, 1989, the five PGE pilot program developers and nine cooperating teacher participants representing the three campuses assembled for a day-long program assessment. Also attending were Department of Public Instruction administrators whose interest in the pilot program and its results had increased.

The morning format included descriptive presentations by each campus seminar director and further elaborations by each of the cooperating teachers. Also featured were short summaries of excellent seminar projects, some of which might serve as prototypes for cooperating teachers in future seminars.

After a lunch break, assessment continued with small group sessions where creative and critical thinking about program results and futures were discussed and notes taken. These small groups assembled back into a large round table discourse format where doubts and convictions were shared and recommendations made for continuation of the pilot program into the Spring of 1990.

The main purpose of the assessment day was to begin assembling descriptions and persuasions to use in petitioning for formal approval of the Professional Growth Experience seminars beyond the pilot program time span and original three campus program participants.

In the Spring of 1990, notification that PGE seminars could be expanded to other Teacher Education Program campuses in Wisconsin was approved though not officially released. All indications are that the PGE reflective seminars model for cooperating teachers will be officially approved and all positive benefits already described will be authorized for future participants.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. Concept originators for the PGE model were Carolyn Kleinfeldt, consultant to the Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction and Luella Ratajczk, supervisor of student teachers at U. Wis.-Oshkosh.

2. Marie Weber, director of educational field experiences, U. Wis.-Madison and Jerald Hauser, director of field experiences, St. Norbert College, De Pere, WI. joined C. Kleinfeldt and L. Ratajczk.

3. Real PGE planning at the Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction (in Madison, Wisconsin) began in earnest with Carolyn Kleinfeldt, Luella Ratajczk, Marie Weber, Jerald Hauser, and Katie Stout(director of the Wisconsin Improvement Program).

4. Carolyn Kleinfeldt, consultant to the Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin.